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SIPDIS

FOR WHA/BSC, WHA/EX, DS/IP/WHA, DS/IP/ITA, DS/IP/OPO
OBO/OPS/AM/WHA

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [AMGT](#) [ASEC](#) [ABLD](#) [CI](#)

SUBJECT: CHILE: INCREASE IN RESIDENTIAL CRIME & ACTION REQUEST

[11](#). SUMMARY. There has been a significant increase in residential crime and burglaries within the last 10 months in Santiago's metropolitan area. The Embassy leases or owns 45 residences in Lo Barnechea and La Dehesa. These are popular suburbs close to the American School and above Santiago's heavy pollution line. Since November 2004, five embassy residences have been burglarized. Other criminal activity (including vandalism, robberies and attempted assault) has involved Embassy family members or household staff in the area. Post requests supplementary funds for its residential security program to help prevent additional burglaries and vandalism (Action Request in para 9). END SUMMARY.

[12](#). During November - December 2004, three Embassy residences were burglarized. In May and October 2005, two more Embassy residences were burglarized, and there were confirmed attempts on at least two others. Although the burglaries were committed while the residents were away from home, recent reports by the Chilean police indicate that home invasions are increasing in these popular suburbs. During this same timeframe, RSO received reports from Embassy residents who had been victims of attempted sexual assaults, robberies, burglary of motor vehicles, vandalism and street scams.

[13](#). La Dehesa and Lo Barnechea are two sought-after suburbs close to the Embassy and American schools. Four years ago, RSO identified these neighborhoods as low crime areas in the Santiago metro area. Recently, the crime rate has skyrocketed. These areas of town are growing by leaps and bounds. Most of the new construction that takes place in La Dehesa and Lo Barnechea is for large, walled, single-family residences. The suburbs are serviced by local police with random neighborhood patrols. The sale prices of the homes in this area range from \$200,000 to over 1 million dollars.

[14](#). The increase in crime is due to several factors. The enormous increase in construction projects throughout the suburbs brings an influx of transient workers, street vendors, and vagrants on a daily basis. It is not uncommon to see groups of five or six individuals walking to and from construction sites. The same individuals often stop at or near embassy residences, looking through trash or loitering under trees. Roving delinquents and other mobile criminals attracted to the affluent area commit a large portion of the crime. Local police admit this is a serious problem. They are having a difficult time prosecuting these criminals, and the number of investigations of crimes and suspicious activity in La Dehesa/Lo Barnechea has overwhelmed them.

[15](#). Chilean homeowners have been augmenting security at their residences over the past year. Bars on windows and doors are becoming common throughout the neighborhoods. Individual homes often have their own guards. More than fifty percent of Chilean homeowners have installed electric fencing and razor (concertina) wire around their property perimeters.

[16](#). Santiago is currently at medium risk for crime and the Embassy's residential security program effectiveness is falling behind the rest of our neighbors. Embassy residences are no longer the hardest target on the block, but one of the softest. While the Embassy residences have alarm systems, this is not a deterrent. Criminals who have burglarized our residences know how to enter without triggering the alarm's contact and motion detector sensors. Houses in La Dehesa/Lo Barnechea are all constructed using large sliding glass doors and windows in order to maximize ventilation in this city where residential air conditioning is rare. Once inside the perimeter wall, a criminal's entry into the house through the glass, presently without bars in nearly every Embassy residence, is relatively easy. Understaffed local police are very slow to respond and the criminals are aware that they have plenty of time to ransack the residence and make their getaway. Because the Embassy's roving patrol is unarmed, they are not our first line of defense. To combat this vulnerability, RSO and the Emergency Action Committee (EAC) believe housing perimeter defenses must be strengthened.

[17](#). Post is exploring options, such as giving these roving patrols limited access to USG-leased/owned properties, so that they can enter the outer gates and do a quick visual check around the grounds. This would require written permission/waivers from Embassy residents. While the Embassy housing pool in La Dehesa/Lo Barnechea has grown over the past

four years, the roving patrol has not. Frequent contact with the Carabineros results in goodwill and the best of intentions, but they are woefully under-funded and understaffed in a country where the ratio of policeman to citizen is 1:1600.

18. As crime increases in the suburbs, it is also increasing in town. The media has been reporting that major construction is planned for two properties directly across from and behind the Embassy. Currently a university owns the land directly behind the rear Embassy wall. Large soccer fields occupy the property. Construction plans call for several 20-story office/ condominium buildings. Directly across from the Embassy is a two-story building with numerous stores and restaurants. This building will be demolished and replaced by a 45-story building. Construction is set to begin in 2006. Both DS and OBO were advised of these construction plans during their recent visits to post.

19. ACTION REQUEST: Post requests funds in the amount of \$40,000 to install razor wire around the perimeter of our existing USG-leased residences in La Dehesa/Lo Barnechea, Embassy perimeter wall and Deputy Chief of Mission's USG-owned residence. Post also requests additional funds under function code 5823 to hire a second mobile patrol.

110. Mission understands Continuing Resolution restrictions and potential future budget cuts do not bode well for this request, but we will appreciate any support to help alleviate this security and morale problem.

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